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ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9585  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001144

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL, EEB, DS/SI/IS, and DS/SI/CS.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [ANET](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAGR](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: IRC ASHGABAT REQUESTS DEPARTMENT APPROVAL TO OFFER WIFI INTERNET ACCESS TO PATRONS

¶1. This is an action request. See paragraph 5.

¶2. The Information Resource Center in Ashgabat (IRC Ashgabat), part of Embassy Ashgabat's Public Affairs Section, would like to extend its Internet access service via wireless internet service (WIFI) to its patrons. The availability of the Internet across Turkmenistan is one of the most limited in the world. Turkmen Telekom, a state-owned enterprise with a near monopoly on telephony and multimedia services, has not issued new individual Internet accounts since 2004. In a capital city with 500,000 inhabitants, there are just five Internet cafes at hourly rates unaffordable for the average citizen. The bandwidth for the entire country is only two megabytes. School classrooms may have computers but no Internet connection. As far as post is aware, WiFi at IRC Ashgabat will be the first 'hotspot' in the country. (Although a Russian telecommunications company has announced publicly it was working on a contract to bring wireless Internet access to Turkmenistan, as well as Internet access via cellphone.) Needless to say, it remains a challenge for those seeking continued and stable access to the Internet for educational and professional development.

¶3. The IRC will build WiFi service onto the existing contract with the Ashgabat-based international Internet Service Provider (the server is in Italy) and allow patrons to access it using their own laptops. The Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section and IRC are located in a separate Turkmenistan government-owned hotel away from the U.S. Embassy compound. While the Public Diplomacy Section does have an SBU system, classified documents are not processed at the site and the SBU system is separated from the IRC by a guarded hardline. The SBU system and the IRC LAN are entirely independent and have no common cable runs, equipment locations, or signal paths.

¶4. IRC Ashgabat offers the Turkmen public a rapidly growing selection of over 1,000 books, 400 DVDs and videos and more than 30 periodicals on American culture, politics, and history. There are self-study opportunities through its five learning stations and three access terminals dedicated for alumni of USG-sponsored exchange programs. IRC Ashgabat patrons have access to Factiva, Lexis/Nexis and numerous other commercial databases as well as State Department publications and press releases. Currently, the IRC has internet access through its nine desktop terminals. In our ongoing efforts to promote U.S. foreign policy, culture and values, we hope that offering wireless Internet access will increase the number of young and energetic alumni, students, and professionals who visit our center and benefit from the Internet.

¶5. Action Request: Post seeks Department approval to install wireless internet service in its Information Resource Center. Post understands that, if approved, there would need to be some controls

for auditing, controlling and/or limiting access (i.e. limited range wireless) and would appreciate any guidance that the Department can provide.

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